



DURHAM PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE  
Meeting Minutes  
**Tuesday, January 24, 2023**  
7:00 pm  
Town Council Chambers



**Call to Order:** Cathy Leach called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm. In attendance: Joe Friedman, Al Howland, Rachel Gasowski, Cathy Leach, Tracy Schroeder, Matt Swiesz, Brian Keegan in person, and Genevieve Brown and Michael Drooker on Zoom.

**Approval of Agenda:** Al made a motion to approve the agenda, Tracy seconded. No discussion, approval by roll call vote, 7-0.

**Approval of Minutes:** November 29, 2022. Al made a motion to approve the minutes, Tracy seconded. Approval by roll call 5-0. Brian Keegan and Gen Brown did not vote as they were not present as members at the 11/29/22 meeting.

**Public Comments** (limit to 5 minutes per person): There were no public comments.

**Roundtable:**

- Cathy welcomed new committee members Matt, Brian, and Gen. She indicated that another resident has applied to be on the committee and once approved, we will have a full committee!
- Joe indicated he had brought the committee's wish to be part of any Wagon Hill Farm planning to the Town Council and its advice was to monitor for now as there are no major plans for programming at this point; focus is on the water main project.
- Al mentioned there is a bill at the state house regarding recreation. He will get more information and bring it back to the committee.
- Cathy requested that anyone who may want to be vice chair to let her know. She also mentioned that we could consider rotating minute taking.
- Cathy reviewed the roles of regular and alternate members. Alternates do not vote unless a regular member is not present. She also asked that we reply if we cannot make a meeting to ensure we have a quorum.

**Update from the Parks & Recreation Director**

Rachel provided the following updates:

- Frost Fest: last community event of 2022 had a huge turnout even after moving to Sunday due to weather. Registration opened mid-December for 2023 winter programs - strong turnout for all programs.
- Pickle ball playing 3 nights/week and are full. With all registrations DPR realized \$29,000 in revenue to jump start the year.

- Gunstock ski program had to delay the first day because it rained. Offering 2 sessions with 215 people participating.
- Had to cancel teacher workshop day yesterday due to weather.
- Planning well under way for summer camps. Looking to hire counselors, junior counselors, and a Camp director. Working with school system to get dates for the Reach program. Snow days have already impacted the first week of summer camp. If that week is cancelled it will impact revenue projections
- Dept. is having difficulty securing a second van for the summer.
- February school break week camp being planned, and registration is open.
- Sweetheart Skate coming up, typically good participation.
- Resident Mike Hoffman contacted Rachel whether Parks and Rec would have any interest in the pump house. Brian suggested that the location is great, but the question is who would be responsible for upkeep, etc. Rachel would like to use for storage, but the upkeep issue and the fact it often floods would need to be addressed.
- Rachel had a general discussion with Sara Callahan, the town's new land stewardship coordinator, about Wagon Hill Farm usage and how they can partner in programming. Sara is interested in partnering on trails walks, bird watching, etc.
- Other upcoming events: Slush Cup, Egg Hunt, Memorial Day ceremony. Rachel would like to have a small committee to help with Memorial Day; Downtown Durham Day, would like to bring back the family campout and Music on Main this summer.

## **Business**

### **Durham Day 2023:**

- Rachel led a discussion about Durham Day 2023. Survey of vendors from 2022 event indicated high approval of a June date and being held downtown. In 2023, DPR would like to expand the event to the whole weekend. Thinking of a 5K race-Durham Dash on Friday, (using the HS certified course), possible partner with Tideline for an after party. The main event would be on Saturday, maybe a movie that evening.
- Need to firm up a date. If in June, some events to avoid such as HS graduation, possible Rotary event.
- Joe brought up that a few people were disappointed that the picnic at Wagon Hill was gone and suggested doing it at another time. Cathy brought up that close to 88% people in the survey indicated the downtown location was preferred. She felt we need to be mindful not to ask too much of DPR. Al also supported the downtown location.
- Joe asked whether the 2022 conflict with UNH Alumni Weekend was problematic. Rachel spoke with the UNH coordinator of alumni weekend and there wasn't a problem. In fact, there may be more opportunity for cross marketing.
- Rachel and Kellie have thought about bringing in food trucks. The restaurants didn't participate to the extent we had hoped. Some restaurants indicated it was difficult to have staff on hand.
- Cathy and Al suggested the Durham Day planning committee begin meeting.
- Brian mentioned that Newmarket has a big gravel bike ride called Raid Rockingham on Father's Day.

- Should have a Rotary member on the committee. Brian said we need a bigger committee; Rachel agrees and will look to set up a meeting for next week.
- Rachel would like to plan for the weekend of June 17 to partner with the Rotary event. Committee supported this decision.

#### **Review & discuss ARRC Proposal for Parks/Playground Planning:**

- Committee was sent a proposal from the UNH ARRC (Applied Recreation Research Collaborative) Lab, UNH Department of Recreation Management & Policy
- Proposal submitted by Dr. Michael Ferguson and Professor Matthew Frye related to DPR and committee goal of gathering community input and provide recommendations for Parks & Playground planning.
- Rachel and Cathy provided some background: A DPR and committee goal throughout most of 2022 was to conduct a 1–3-year strategic plan incorporating 5 prioritized topics: Parks/Playgrounds Master Plan, Programming, Facilities, Funding, and Partnerships. At the DPR budget meeting in the fall, Administrator Selig advised to focus only on the Parks & Playground Planning due to budget restrictions. Rachel submitted a budget/CIP write up & request. The CIP request for \$30,000 was approved by the Town Council as part of the 2023 budget. Cathy and Rachel met with the UNH faculty the first time before the Administrator's recommendation so talked with them about the community input and five focus areas.
- The proposal, received on Jan. 12, highlights parks and playgrounds but incorporates other areas as well, and provides five scenarios with different tasks, methods, and costs.
- The committee had a number of questions, including:
  - Clarification of outcomes of Final Report (task 6). Specifically, the difference between the *technical management report* vs. the *specific managerial guidance*.
  - Can the timeline be shortened?
  - Can they provide an itemized cost for each type of task within each scenario?
  - Can we create our own scenarios (like a menu)?
  - Clarification on the population survey method - door to door?
  - Could Churchill Rink be included as part of facilities study?
  - What are the required responsibilities from the dept. and committee? Are there some things we can do ourselves?
- Joe asked about the CIP write up and should the proposal/study only focus on Jackson's Landing Playground and Woodridge Park? The committee discussed this, and members felt that being able to encompass more now would be beneficial longer term. It would allow for community input on a number of Parks & Rec related items, likely saving time (of staff, committee, and residents) and money (not having to request more funding for community input on other topics & planning) in the long run.
- Rachel also indicated that the items are very interconnected. For instance, how can we undertake park/playground planning without knowing what the community wants?
- Al summarized that the goal of the study is to review facilities, look at what the community wants, what are the trends, and how do we get there? He feels this could result in a master plan for all properties, providing data to drive reasonable decisions.
- Gen asked if we had identified an underserved population or if we were looking to identify a

certain population. Rachel replied that no population has been identified but is hoping the study will help to identify any underserved populations.

- Joe indicated we should clarify whether the funding can be spent over more than one year, given the proposed study timeframe. He also encouraged Rachel to meet with the Administrator and the Business Manager about the CIP write up.
- Cathy summarized she and Rachel will formulate our questions for the UNH faculty, and our goal is to clarify scope, outcomes, and timeline.
- Brian suggested we recognize that recreation means different things to different people.
- Rachel will ask Dr. Ferguson and Prof. Frye to attend our February meeting.

**Begin discussion of 2023 Committee Goals:**

Due to the closeness of our adjournment time, the committee deferred this item to its next meeting. Send any possible goals to Cathy.

**Adjourn:** Al motioned to adjourn; Tracy seconded. Roll call vote to adjourn, 7-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 pm.